PUBLIC OPINIONS ABOUT B.C. PARKS

SUMMARY REPORT

Ministry of Parks

January, 1990

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In May 1989, the B.C. Ministry of Parks conducted a mail survey with a random sample of 3,956 adult B.C. residents. The primary purposes of the survey were to:

* identify some of the benefits that British Columbians felt they received from having a provincial park system;

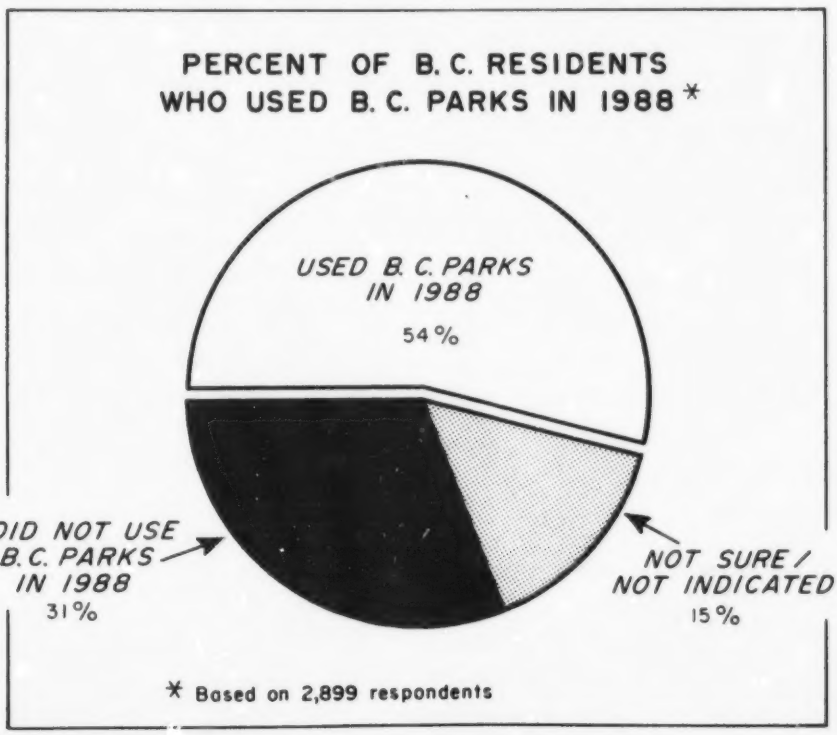
* determine if British Columbians were satisfied with the way the Ministry of Parks has carried out several management responsibilties; and

* identify those park programs which British Columbians would like to see more emphasis given to in the next few years.

Of the 3,956 residents that were sent a questionnaire, 2,899 returned useable questionnaires.*

Following are some of the initial findings from this survey.

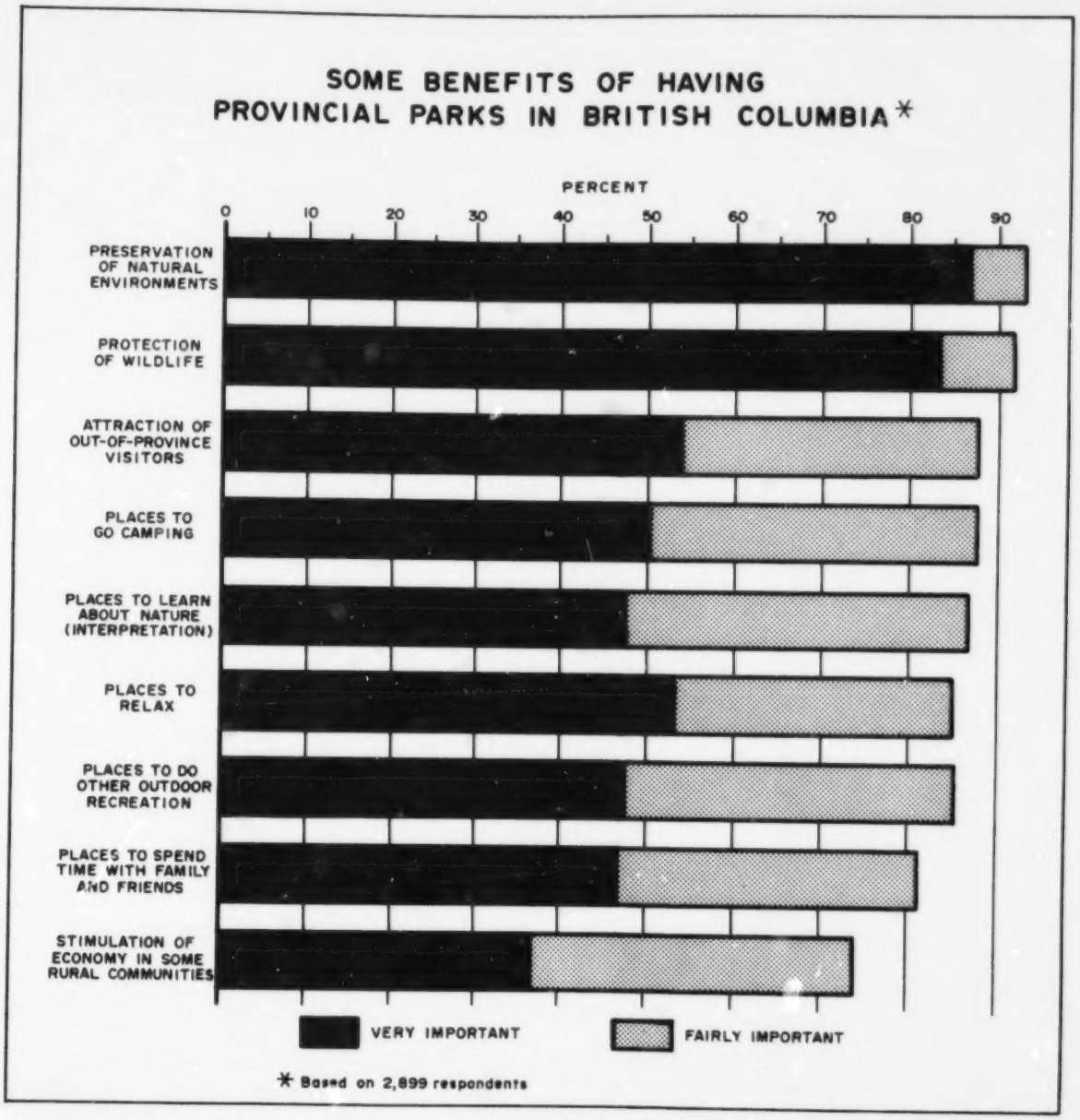
1. More than half (54%) of B.C. residents used a provincial park in 1988.


PERCENT OF B. C. RESIDENTS
WHO USED B. C. PARKS IN 1988 *
USED B. C. PARKS IN 1988
54 %
DID NOT USE B.C. PARKS IN 1988
31 %
NOT SURE / NOT INDICATED
15 %
* Based on 2,899 respondents

The question was: Did you happen to use any provincial park in 1988? The response alternatives were: NO, NOT SURE, and YES.

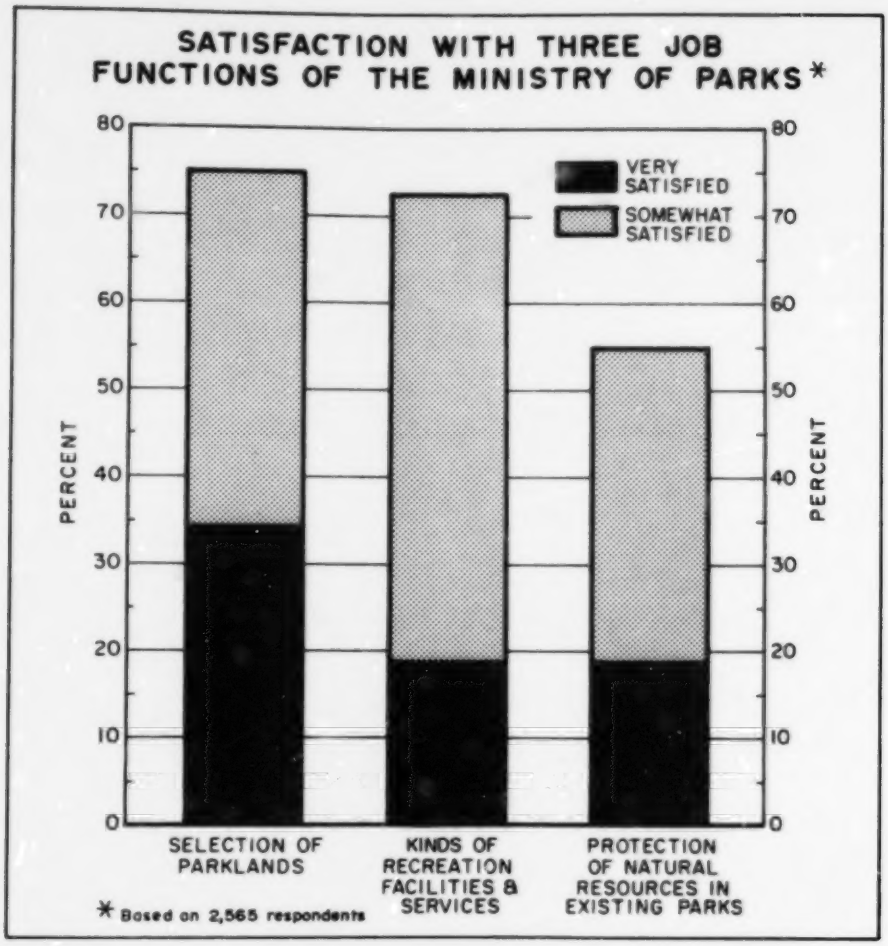
* The Ministry of Parks received questionnaires between May 23, 1989 and September 8, 1989. The potential respondents were reduced to 3,825 because 131 were physically incapable of completing the questionnaire, were deceased, had moved from the community, had moved out of the province or were not residents of British Columbia. The return rate was 76 percent.

2. Nearly 9 in 10 British Columbians (86%) indicated that the preservation of natural environments is a very important benefit of having a provincial park system in British Columbia.



The question was: Listed below are a few benefits that some British Columbians have told us they feel they receive from having provincial parks in British Columbia. For each benefit, please indicate if you think it is a VERY IMPORTANT benefit, a FAIRLY IMPORTANT benefit, or NOT A VERY IMPORTANT benefit to British Columbians. The response alternatives were: VERY IMPORTANT, FAIRLY IMPORTANT, NOT VERY IMPORTANT and DON'T KNOW.

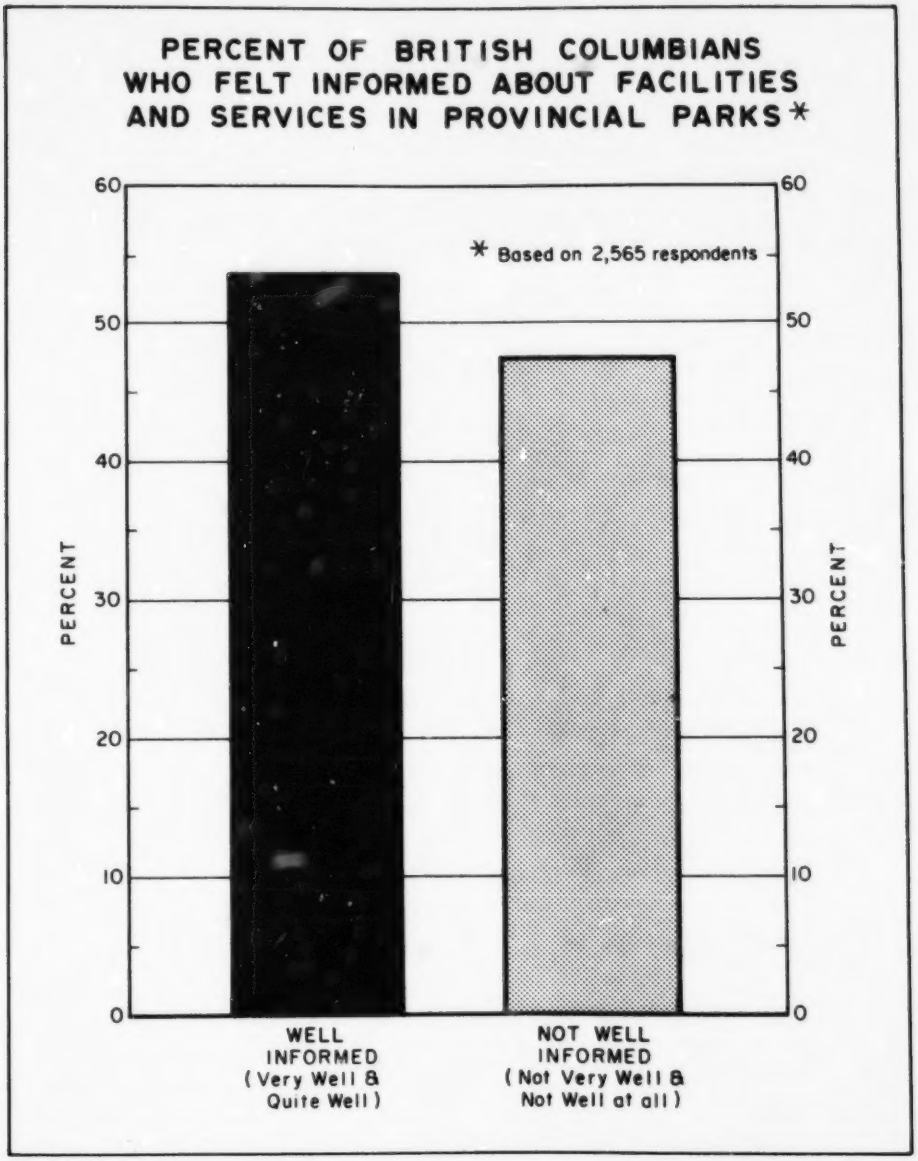
3. British Columbians tended to be more satisfied with the jobs the Ministry of Parks has done in selecting parkland (75%) and providing facilities and services (72%) than with the job of protecting natural resources within parks (55%).



The questions were: One of the jobs of the Ministry of Parks is to select land and water areas to become provincial parks. In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the land and water areas which have been selected and established as provincial parks in British Columbia? Another job of the Ministry of Parks is to protect the natural resources, such as the vegetation and water, in provincial parks from overuse, misuse or activities which may damage or degrade the natural condition of these resources. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the Ministry of Parks has protected the natural resources in provincial parks over past five years? Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the kinds of recreation facilties and services currently provided in provincial parks? The response alternatives for all three questions were: VERY SATISFIED, SOMEWHAT SATISFIED, NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED, SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED, VERY DISSATISFIED or NOT SURE.

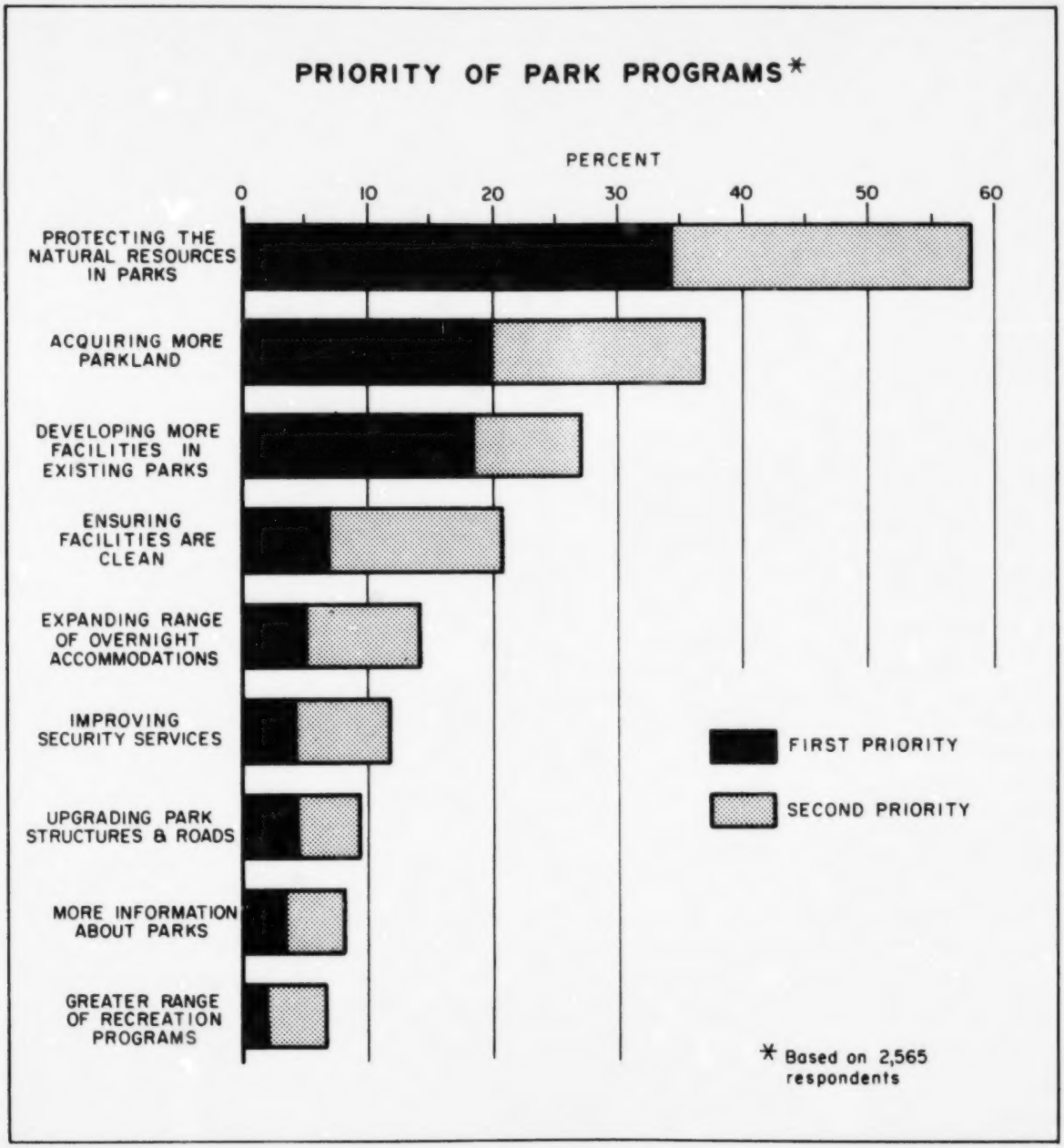
*Note: The results from pages 3 to 10 are based on 2,565 respondents. These respondents expressed some interest in parks or had recently used them.

4. Nearly half of British Columbians (47%) indicated they were not well informed about the facilities and services provided in provincial parks.



The question was: Generally speaking, how well informed do you feel you are about the facilities and services provided in provincial parks. Do you consider yourself yourself to be: VERY WELL INFORMED, QUITE WELL INFORMED, NOT VERY WELL INFORMED or NOT VERY WELL INFORMED AT ALL.

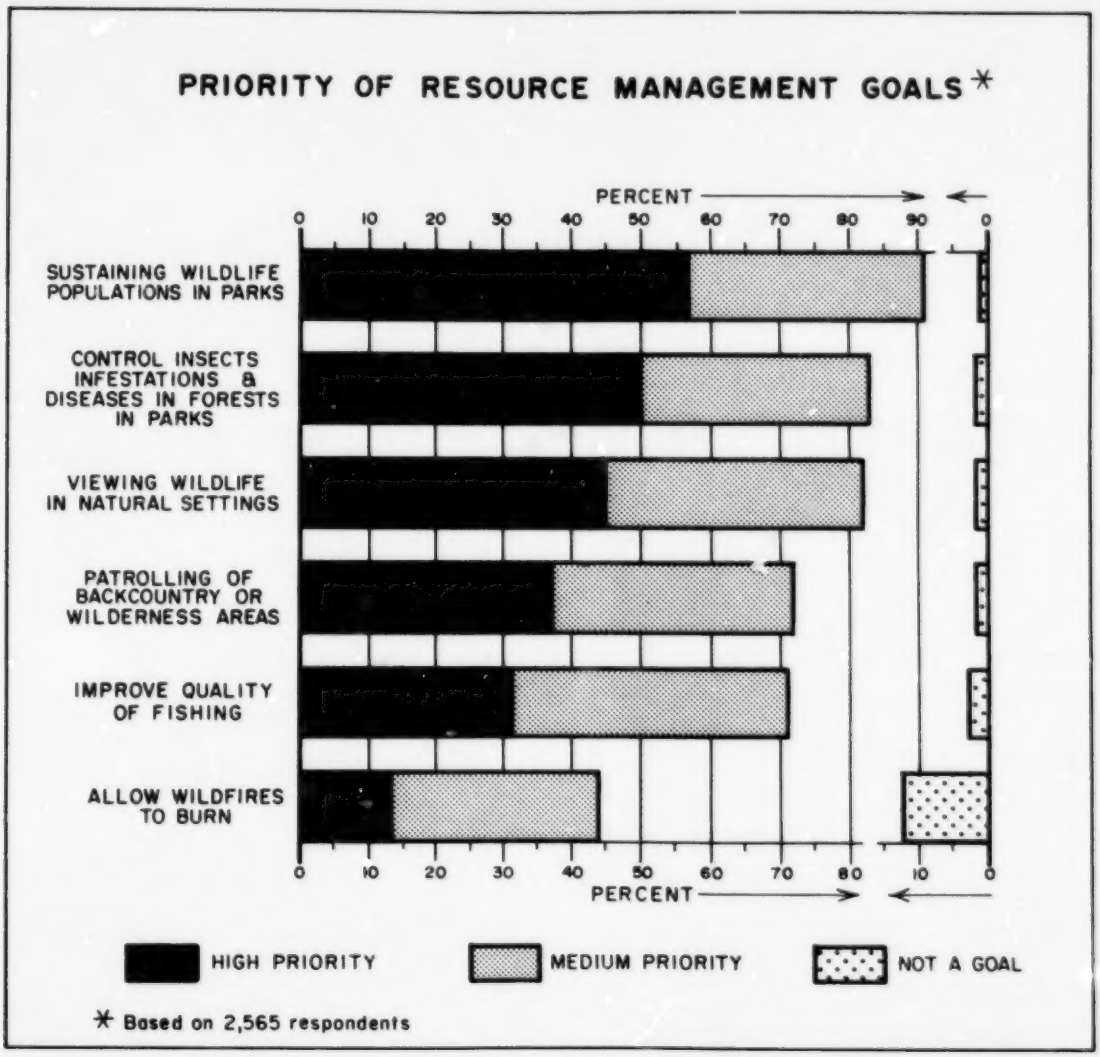
5. Protection of natural resources in provincial parks was the program that British Columbians felt the Ministry of Parks should give the highest priority to in the next few years (58%). The program that received the second highest priority was acquistion of more parkland (36%) followed by the development of more recreation facilities in existing parks (27%) and ensuring facilities are clean (21%).



The question was: Now, we would like to know which of the following park programs you feel the Ministry of Parks should give the highest priority to in the next few years. These programs are broader than the previous goals that have been identified.

6. Sustaining wildlife populations in parks (90%) and controlling insect infestations and diseases of forests in high use areas (83%) were two specific resource management goals British Columbians felt should be given either high or medium priority in the next five years.

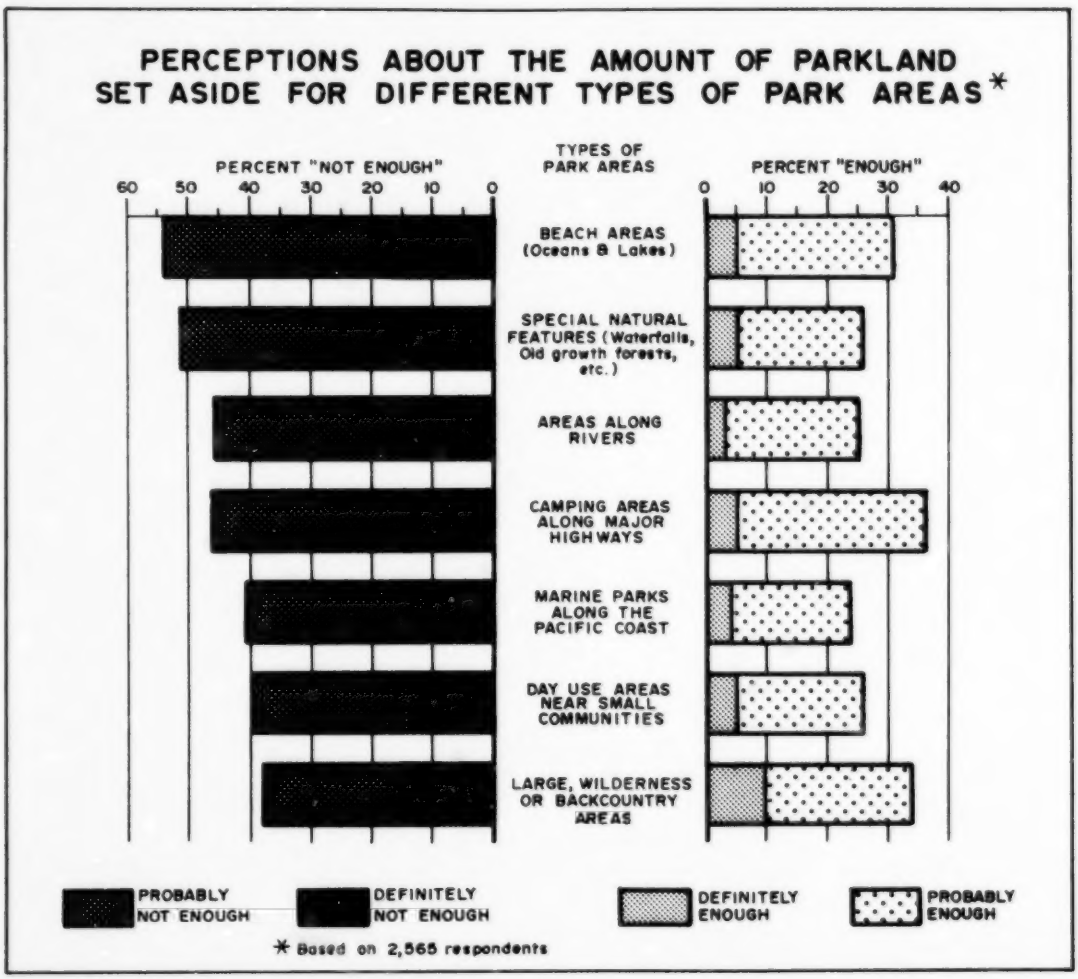
   Less than half of the respondents (44%) indicated that the goal of allowing fires to burn in parks as a natural process for promoting regrowth of diverse vegetation should receive high or medium priority in the next five years.


PRIORITY OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GOALS*
PERCENT
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 0
SUSTAINING WILDLIFE POPULATIONS IN PARKS
CONTROL INSECTS INFESTATIONS & DISEASES IN FORESTS IN PARKS
VIEWING WILDLIFE IN NATURAL SETTINGS
PATROLLING OF BACKCOUNTRY OR WILDERNESS AREAS
IMPROVE QUALITY OF FISHING
ALLOW WILDFIRES TO BURN
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 10 0
PERCENT
HIGH PRIORITY
MEDIUM PRIORITY
NOT A GOAL
* Based on 2,565 respondents

The question was: One purpose of this study is to find out what goals B.C. residents feel the Ministry of Parks should give more emphasis to in the next five years. A few possible goals for the management of natural resources in provincial parks are listed below. Do you feel each one should NOT be a goal, or should be a LOW priority, a MEDIUM priority, or HIGH priority goal for the Ministry of Parks. DON'T KNOW was also provided as a response alternative.

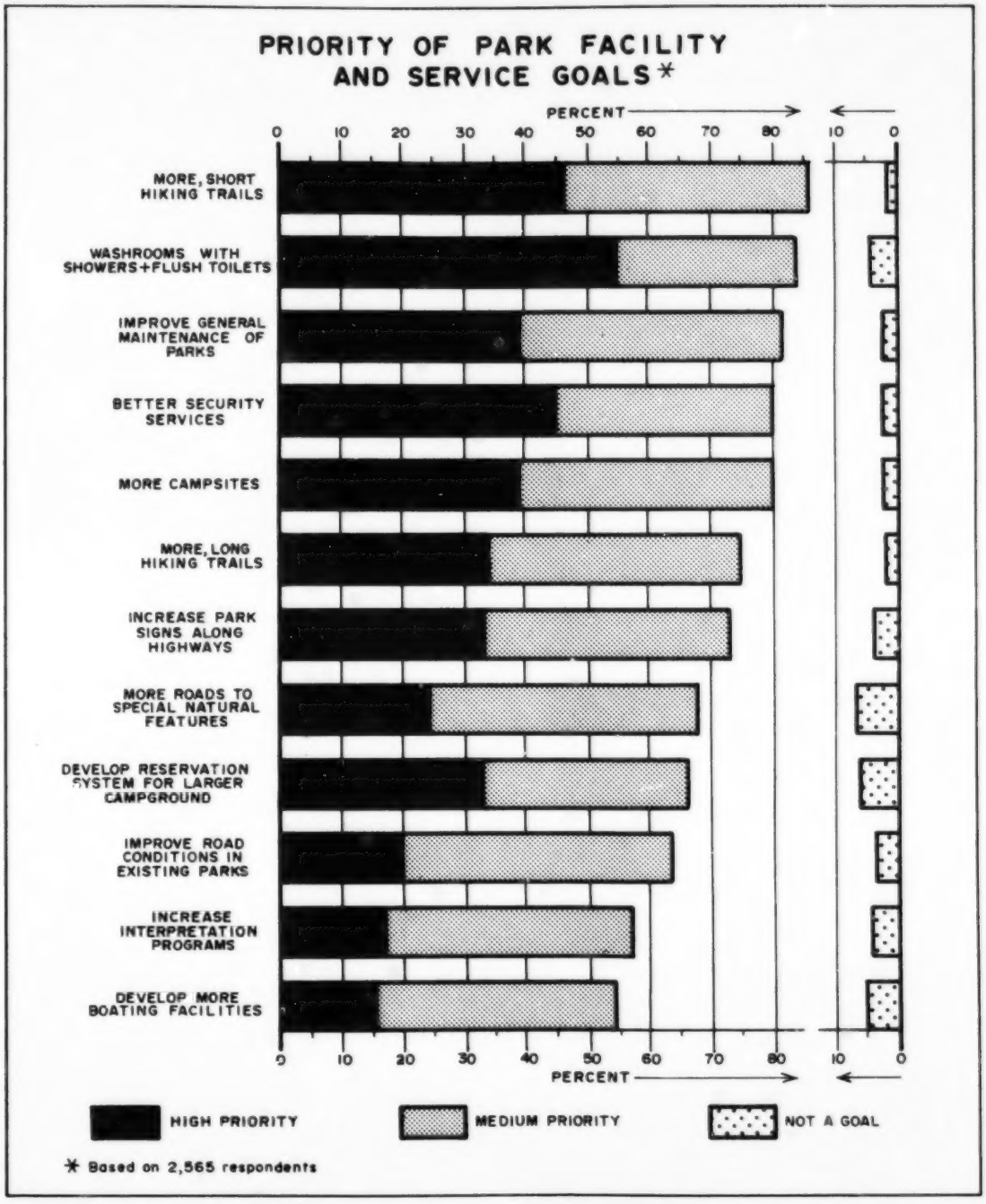
7. Perceptions about the amount of parkland currently available was quite similiar for several types of park areas (i.e. beach areas, special natural areas, areas along rivers and camping areas).

However, when respondents were asked to indicate their preference for more parkland in the next five years, the strongest preference was for beach areas (31%) and special natural features such as waterfalls and old growth forests (29%). The next highest preference was for wilderness or backcountry areas (23%), followed by camping areas (21%), marine parks (18%), areas along rivers (16%), and day use areas near small communities (16%). About 9 percent of the respondents indicated they would not like to see more parkland for any of these types of park areas.


PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF PARKLAND SET ASIDE FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF PARK AREAS*
PERCENT "NOT ENOUGH"
60 50 40 30 20 10 0
TYPES OF PARK AREAS
PERCENT "ENOUGH"
0 10 20 30 40
BEACH AREAS (Oceans & Lakes)
SPECIAL NATURAL FEATURES (Waterfalls, Old growth forests, etc.)
AREAS ALONG RIVERS
CAMPING AREAS ALONG MAJOR HIGHWAYS
MARINE PARKS ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST
DAY USE AREAS NEAR SMALL COMMUNITIES
LARGE, WILDERNESS OR BACKCOUNTRY AREAS
PROBABLY NOT ENOUGH
DEFINITELY NOT ENOUGH
DEFINITELY ENOUGH
PROBABLY ENOUGH
* Based on 2,565 respondents

The questions were: Below are several types of park areas or settings. Would you please look at the pictures and tell us if you feel there is generally enough or not enough provincial parkland for each type of park area. The response alternatives were: DEFINITELY ENOUGH, PROBABLY ENOUGH, UNSURE, PROBABLY NOT ENOUGH and DEFINITELY NOT ENOUGH. Do you feel the amount of parkland for any of the types of park areas indicated in Q.12 should be increased in the next five years?

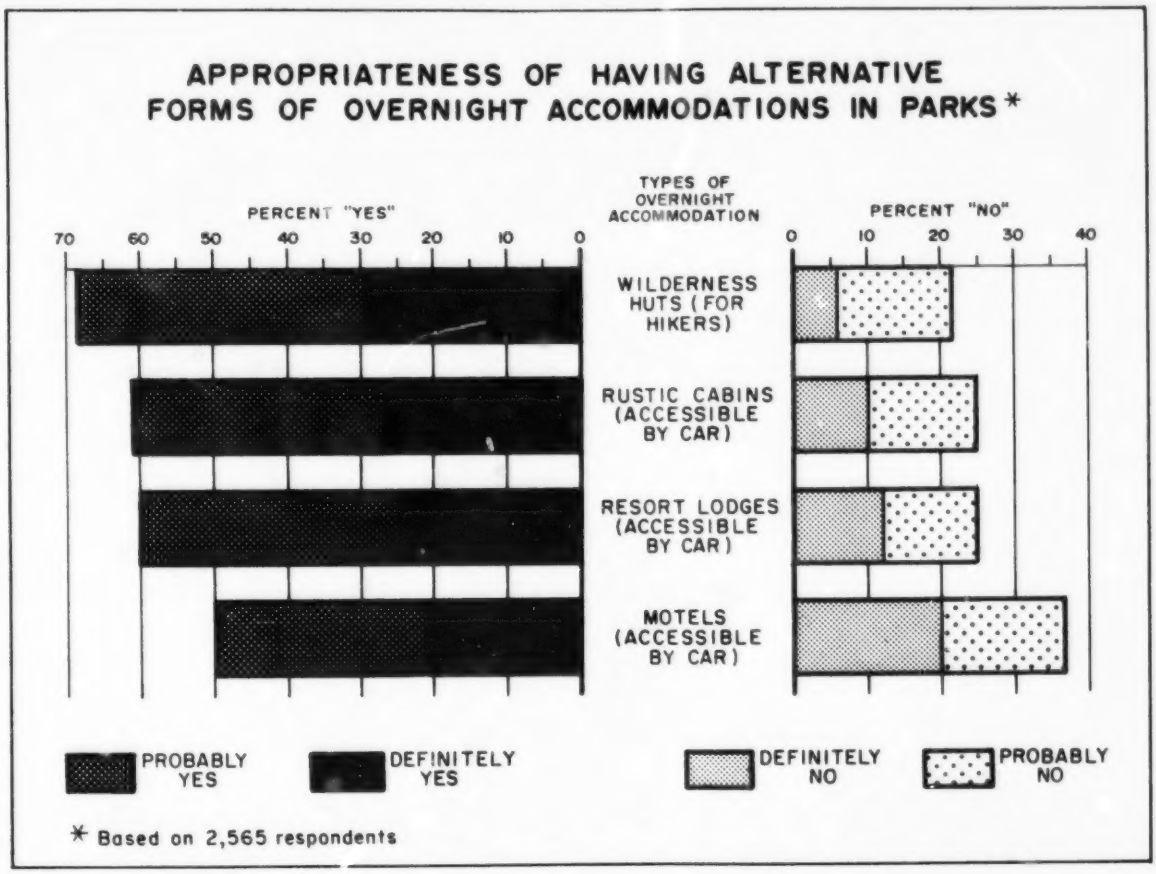
8. Providing more, short hiking trails (86%), upgrading washrooms with showers and flush toilets (83%) and improving the general maintenance of parks (81%) were three specific facility and service goals that British Columbians felt should receive high or medium priority in the next five years.


PRIORITY OF PARK FACILITY AND SERVICE GOALS*
PERCENT
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80
10 0
MORE, SHORT HIKING TRAILS
WASHROOMS WITH SHOWERS+FLUSH TOILETS
IMPROVE GENERAL MAINTENANCE OF PARKS
BETTER SECURITY SERVICES
MORE CAMPSITES
MORE, LONG HIKING TRAILS
INCREASE PARK SIGNS ALONG HIGHWAYS
MORE ROADS TO SPECIAL NATURAL FEATURES
DEVELOP RESERVATION SYSTEM FOR LARGER CAMPGROUND
IMPROVE ROAD CONDITIONS IN EXISTING PARKS
INCREASE INTERPRETATION PROGRAMS
DEVELOP MORE BOATING FACILITIES
HIGH PRIORITY
MEDIUM PRIORITY
NOT A GOAL
* Based on 2,565 respondents

The question was: Next, we have some possible goals for providing facilities and services in provincial parks. Do you feel each one should NOT be a goal or should be a LOW priority, a MEDIUM priority, or HIGH priority goal for the Ministry of Parks in the next five years. The response alternatives also included DON'T KNOW.

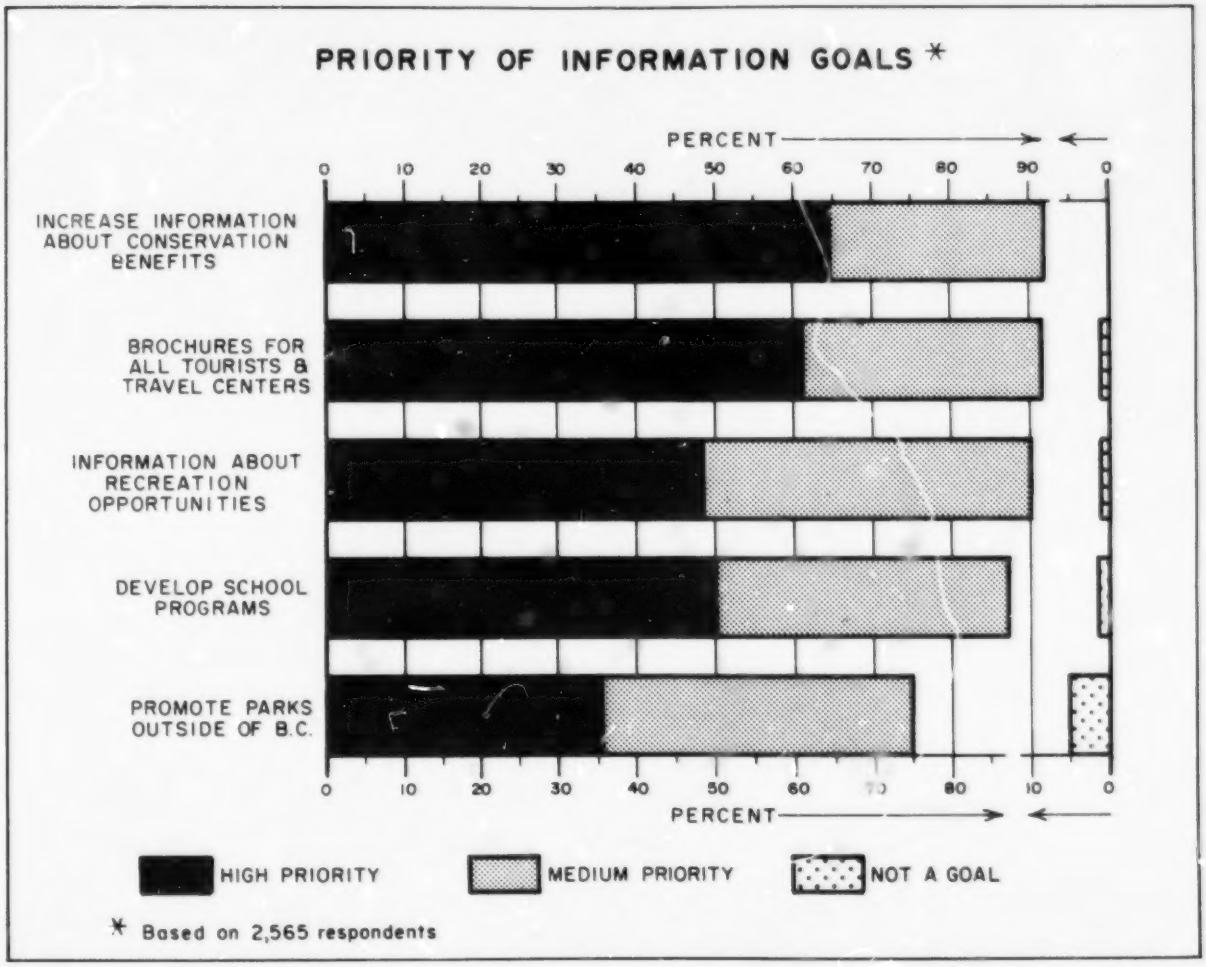
9. One type of overnight accomodation that British Columbians would find most appropriate in a few, selected provincial parks is wilderness huts (67%).

However, when respondents were asked to indicate the type of accomodation they would be most likely to use in the next five years, the highest response was for rustic cabins (46%). This was followed by resort lodges (38%), motels (36%) and wilderness huts (29%).


APPROPRIATENESS OF HAVING ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS IN PARKS*
PERCENT "YES"
70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0
TYPES OF OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION
PERCENT "NO"
0 10 20 30 40
WILDERNESS HUTS (FOR HIKERS)
RUSTIC CABINS (ACCESSIBLE BY CAR)
RESORT LODGES (ACCESSIBLE BY CAR)
MOTELS (ACCESSIBLE BY CAR)
PROBABLY YES
DEFINITELY YES
DEFINITELY NO
PROBABLY NO
* Based on 2,565 respondents

The questions were: One type of overnight accomodation currently provided in provincial parks is campgrounds. Listed below are some other types of overnight accomodation that some British Columbians would like to see and others would not like to see in provincial parks. Please look at each of the pictures and then indicate to what extent you would or would not like to see each of these in a few, selected provincial parks. The response alternatives were: DEFINITELY YES, PROBABLY YES, UNSURE, PROBABLY NO, DEFINITELY NO. Suppose you had a choice of using any of the above accomodations in the next five years. Which of the above accommodations, if any, would you be MOST and SECOND MOST likely to use in the next five years?

10. Increasing information about conservation benefits (92%), providing all travel and tourist information centres with park brochures (91%) and providing more information about recreation opportunities in provincial parks (90%) were three information goals that British Columbians felt should be given high or medium priority to in the next five years.


PRIORITY OF INFORMATION GOALS *
PERCENT
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 0
INCREASE INFORMATION ABOUT CONSERVATION BENEFITS
BROCHURES FOR ALL TOURISTS & TRAVEL CENTERS
INFORMATION ABOUT RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES
DEVELOP SCHOOL PROGRAMS
PROMOTE PARKS OUTSIDE OF B.C.
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 0
PERCENT
HIGH PRIORITY
MEDIUM PRIORITY
NOT A GOAL
* Based on 2,565 respondents

The question was: Here are some suggested goals for providing information about provincial parks. Do you feel each should NOT be a goal or should be a LOW priority, a MEDIUM priority, or HIGH priority goal for the Ministry of Parks in the next five years. The response alternatives included DON'T KNOW.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on these initial findings, several conclusions may be drawn. First, provincial parks provide a variety of benefits for British Columbians. Two of the main benefits are the protection of wildlife and the preservation of natural environments for the future.

Second, over 70 percent of British Columbians are either somewhat or very satisfied overall with the selection and establishment of parklands, and with the facilities and services provided. A somewhat smaller majority are satisfied overall with the way in which the natural resources in existing parks have been protected over the past five years.

Third, British Columbians would like to see the highest priority given to the protection of natural resources in parks in the next few years. Two particular areas they would like the Ministry of Parks to focus on are ensuring that wildlife populations in parks are sustained and ensuring that the forests in high use areas remain healthy.

Fourth, British Columbians would like to see the second highest priority given to the acquistion of more parkland in the next few years. While British Columbians expressed interest in having more parkland for all types of parks, the strongest preferences were for beaches and areas that contain special natural features (e.g. waterfalls, old growth forests).

Fifth, British Columbians would like to see the third highest priority given to facility development in the next few years. Two types of facility developments they would most prefer are the provision of more short, hiking trails near campgrounds or day use areas and the upgrading of washrooms with showers and flush toilets.